Safety conditions in Coal Mines

1165. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the nationalisation of coal mines was done primarily due to rise in accidents;

(b) if so, what are the details of die steps taken to streamline the safety conditions in mines since its nationalisation; and

(c) whether Government are of the view that the privatisation of mining sector may prove panacea to the problems of mines safety?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OFTHE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) Nationalisation of coal mines in 1972 and 1973 was done with a view to providing adequate investments in coal mines, conserve coal resources, ensuring mines safety, environmental protection and decent living standards for the coal labour.

(b) Coal India Limited (CIL) and its subsidiary companies have been taking the following steps to streamline the safety conditions in mines since nationalisation;

(i) Formation of a Structured Internal Safety Organisation both at the apex Coal India Limited level as well as at each of the subsidiary company level;

(ii) Revamping the rescue organisation, after taking over the existing Central Coal Mines Rescue Committee by the coal companies, by constructing, equipping and staffing new rescue stations and rescue rooms; and provision of modem equipments and modem training facilities;

(iii) Promoting workers' participation in safety management through bodies, where workmen's representatives participate right from the mine level safety committees to the apex CIL level, Coal India Safety Board and the National Level Standing Committee on Safety in Coal mines;

(iv) Installation of computerised continuous environment monitoring in some fiery mines and highly gassy mines;

(v) Examination of each mine before every monsoon to assess the danger of inundation from both surface and underground sources of water and preparation of suitable action plans for preventive measures against the same;

(vi) Regular periodic safety audit of mines by experienced mining and electrical/mechanical engineers to undertake and their recommendations, implemented;

(vii) Designing of roof support systems in the development workings in underground mines by scientific support systems based on rock-mass-rating studies;

(viii) Progressive use of steel support in underground mines;

(ix) Greater use of quick-setting cement capsule grouted roof bolts for support in development workings in underground mines;

(x) Reduced exposure of workers to mining hazards by mechanisation of loading operations by increasing use of Side Discharge Loaders and Load Haul Dumpers in the underground mines;

(xi) Thrust on training and retraining of workmen, supervisors to increase safety awareness of the workmen;

(xii) Formulation of a comprehensive action plan to reduce accidents in opencast mines and at surface of mines.

(c) The Government is aware of the need to undertake adequate measures to ensure mines safety when the private sector enters the coal sector. To this end, the Bill, which proposes to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 to allow Indian companies both in public sector and private sector to do non- captive coal mining, seeks to confer powers on the Central Government to frame suitable rules, which will, *inter alia*, lay down norms for location of coal mines, minimum size of mines and such other conditions that may be necessary to ensure mines safety. In addition, the extant statutory provisions in regard to mines safety will also govern coal mining practices of private sector entrants.